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DATE: January 9, 1997

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Task Force on Assessment of Students' Learning

PRESENT: Bert Ahern, Jim Cotter, Nat Hart, Tom Johnson, Dean Sam Schuman, Engin Sungur, Nancy Mooney attended as a guest

The Task Force assembled at 4 p.m. in Behmler Conference Room.

Ahern distributed copies of memos to chairs of the Academic Support Services, Campus Resources and Planning, Curriculum, Faculty Development, General Education, Honors Program, International Programs and Scholastic Committees. He also announced that three disciplines had returned the Planning Exercise and Survey - History, Philosophy, and Wellness & Sports Science.

- **Current Assessment Practices: Institutional** The committee reviewed current institutional research data with Nancy Mooney. Most of the data does not speak to the assessment of student learning but to other measures of institutional effectiveness. Moreover, those instruments that do address student learning [see 2nd Appendix of the Progress Report . . . Dec. 1996] have largely been the responsibility of Steve Granger who is retired. It was observed that the maintenance of some of these latter activities and any new data collection in connection with the assessment of student learning will require either new resources or redirection of current staff activity. It would be premature, however, to make any specific recommendations about data collection until the committee has reviewed the plans of the units.
- **Update on electronic communications** Over the quarter break, Engin Sungur arranged for a Web page for Assessment. Currently found under the UMM Committees button on the UMM home page, it identifies committee members, contains meeting minutes and the Progress Report. The intention is to use it to provide the widest possible access to the work of the committee. One concern was that many faculty do not have ready access to the WWW. Another member questioned the wisdom of making early draft documents available to the WWW. The consensus seemed to be that the Home Page was a good way to go; that it would facilitate the sharing of information and approaches that was integral to the UMM Plan. At the same time, no document should be added to the home page without the agreement of the Task Force and/or the individual unit from which it emanated.
- **Review of Progress Report** The Progress Report went to Dr. Lopez of NCA on Dec. 20, 1996. We have received no acknowledgment or comment on the report but look for some response in the next few weeks. In looking at the timetable after p.18, Sungur noted that the many activities in this first cycle divided into five stages - Organizational, ending Feb. 1997; Planning, ending March 1997; Implementation, going into October 1997; Dissemination, going into Nov. 1997 and Evaluation running into December 1997. This timetable is a draft which the Task Force needs to affirm or revise.

Members had only received the report a day earlier but a good discussion ensued. Most of the discussion focused on the locus of decision-making. Who determines if the goals proposed by a given unit are appropriate; if the

expected outcomes make sense; if the methods of assessment are reliable? The model decentralizes decision-making. The function of the Assessment Committee is to assure that each unit has answered the necessary questions and, where appropriate raise questions for clarification. The unit has the responsibility for design and implementation. Does this mean an absence of accountability or quality control? The present model proposes that quality control comes through the public exercise of responsibility by the unit faculty. In addition to demands of professional integrity, a practical incentive for taking the process seriously will operate via the value of credible assessment approaches in order to buttress the individual unit's efforts to secure approval of policy changes and resources. The challenge to the Task Force and to the units is to refine this model so that assessment activities, including report and review practices, are integral to rather than distractions from the instructional activities of the faculty.

At the next meeting of the Task Force, members should come prepared to revise or endorse the Progress Report.

- Timetable What action if any can the Task Force take to the Campus Assembly meeting scheduled for Jan. 27. Action on the proposed By-Laws should be appropriate if the committee, at its next meeting, can describe the necessary tasks of the committee five years from now. Since the Planning Exercise and Survey responses are not due until Jan. 17, after the agenda items for the Assembly meeting, the Task Force will not be prepared to place a recommendation for the endorsement of the proposed plan on the agenda. By the time of the meeting itself, however, the Task Force should be able to indicate whether or not it expects substantial modification to the proposed plan and when it would expect to seek Assembly endorsement of the Assessment Plan.

The next meeting will occur on Thursday, Jan. 16, at 4 p.m., place to be announced.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.